

Random Encounters Nasty Surprises

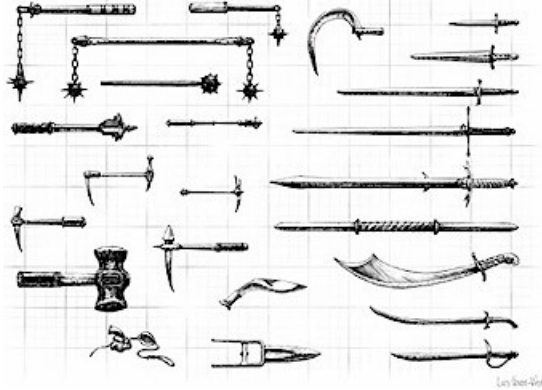
By Jeff Quick



Double Agent Weaponry

Even the most hack-happy group of players tries to make plans. Some groups enjoy the planning of an encounter more than the execution. Regardless of how deeply the plans run, they usually fall apart in the first round of actual enemy contact. But players never completely give up making them because some plan is better than no plan at all.

Anybody with divination spells tries to use them to aid planning. But players rarely spend the time or resources to erect appropriate defenses against divination themselves. Your villains can gleefully exploit this weakness, giving players a scary jolt when the opposition seems a little too prepared. When it becomes clear that the enemy knows their plans, it means they weren't safe when they thought they were. It means they still might not be safe. Paranoia sets in as the players wonder if an untrustworthy NPC gave away their schemes, or if someone in the group is under the enemy's influence.



The best way to plant divination on the party is to make them want to carry it around with them. What's the thing that every adventuring party carries in spades? Weapons. Most spellcasters don't bother to make cursed weapons. It's too much money and effort to create a sword that makes opposing fighters slightly less efficient. But a good weapon with backlash is a whole different story.

Weapons are the spy item of choice, since these magic items don't have charges and won't be quickly discarded. When a weapon receives an additional power that resembles a *clairaudience/clairvoyance* effect in addition to whatever other abilities it has, it can prove a real pain to player characters. Further, PC spellcasters take more time and effort on discovering secrets about items meant for them to carry. Staves get close examination while a broadsword is likely to get a cursory *identify* spell and then be promptly ignored by the curious wizard thereafter.

Since the item is the object of a spell instead of its source, *identify* does not alert the owner to a weapon's divinatorial function.

When a villain wants to put this in the PCs' hands, he hands it to an expendable lieutenant as a gift. The villain can then listen or watch as the lieutenant approaches and battles the PCs, and continue the show once they defeat the villain's underlings and claim the spoils.

Spy Item

Below, we've calculated the cost to add the *clairaudience/clairvoyance* effect to any item as a weapon special ability. Then, we follow up with a sample item ready to use on unsuspecting PCs.

Eavesdropping: A weapon with this property has a corresponding fetish tuned to the weapon. When the fetish is held, the holder can listen to the vicinity of the weapon's wielder as a free action as if the holder had cast the *clairaudience/clairvoyance* spell.

No aura; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*; Price +27,000 gp; Cost +13,500 gp and 1,080 XP.

Shadowededge

This +3 *longsword* has a heavy tip, and light is reflected blackly from its blade instead of shining the light's normal color. The sword allows its wielder to *detect good* as the spell 3 times per day, and it can dim all nonmagical lights in a 30-foot radius, centered on the wielder, also 3 times per day.

The sword was also made with a corresponding dagger. Anyone who holds the dagger can, at will, listen to the sword's vicinity as if the holder had cast a *clairaudience/clairvoyance* spell on the sword's location.

Moderate evocation; CL 10; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *detect good*; Price 137,417 gp; Cost 69,017 gp + 5,472 XP.

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